

Message

From: Mattas-Curry, Lahne [Mattas-Curry.Lahne@epa.gov]
Sent: 11/30/2017 3:39:32 PM
To: Rodan, Bruce [rodan.bruce@epa.gov]; Burden, Susan [Burden.Susan@epa.gov]; Gilliland, Alice [Gilliland.Alice@epa.gov]; Impellitteri, Christopher [Impellitteri.Christopher@epa.gov]
CC: vanDrunick, Suzanne [vanDrunick.Suzanne@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Wolverine Clips 11/30/17

Hi all:

Ex. 5 - Deliberative Process

Lahne

From: Bassler, Rachel
Sent: Thursday, November 30, 2017 10:26 AM
To: Kaplan, Robert <kaplan.robert@epa.gov>; Grantham, Nancy <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>; Mattas-Curry, Lahne <Mattas-Curry.Lahne@epa.gov>; Drinkard, Andrea <Drinkard.Andrea@epa.gov>; Guerriero, Margaret <guerriero.margaret@epa.gov>; Korleski, Christopher <korleski.christopher@epa.gov>; Lippert, Allison <lippert.allison@epa.gov>; Rowan, Anne <rowan.anne@epa.gov>; Mankowski, Matthew <mankowski.matthew@epa.gov>; Clark, Jacqueline <clark.jacqueline@epa.gov>; Williams, Thomas <williams.tom@epa.gov>; Berkoff, Michael <berkoff.michael@epa.gov>; Wilson, Jennifer <wilson.jenniferA@epa.gov>; Harris, Kimberly <harris.kimberly@epa.gov>; Moore, Tammy <moore.tammy@epa.gov>; Nelson, Leverett <nelson.leverett@epa.gov>; Tanaka, Joan <Tanaka.Joan@epa.gov>; Holst, Linda <holst.linda@epa.gov>; Frey, Rebecca <frey.rebecca@epa.gov>; Harris, Michael <harris.michael@epa.gov>; Poy, Thomas <poy.thomas@epa.gov>; Bair, Rita <bair.rita@epa.gov>; El-Zein, Jason <el-zein.jason@epa.gov>; Deamer, Eileen <deamer.eileen@epa.gov>
Subject: Wolverine Clips 11/30/17

Wolverine PFAS press clips
US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs
November 30, 2017

Grand Rapids Press
waste records
WOODTV
WZZM
FOX 17
Grand Rapids Business Journal

At townhall, DEQ says Wolverine has not provided any

Wolverine in crosshairs over PFAS at town hall meeting
Experts discuss Wolverine contamination at town hall
Lawsuits filed against Wolverine Worldwide
Man files lawsuit against Wolverine Worldwide

http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2017/11/wolverine_pfas_townhall_2.html

At townhall, DEQ says Wolverine has not provided any waste records

Posted Nov 29, 11:20 PM By Garret Ellison

ROCKFORD, MI -- Why is the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality relying on word-of-mouth and public tips to find Wolverine World Wide tannery waste dumps around northern Kent County?

Doesn't Wolverine have any waste disposal records?

Many have asked that question. Brian McKanna, whose home off Wolven Ave. NE is being tested for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances named PFAS (or PFCs) in the drinking water, put it to the DEQ in open forum on Wednesday night in Rockford.

"At this point, we don't have any Wolverine records for waste disposal," Abigail Hendershott, acting supervisor for the DEQ Grand Rapids Office, told the crowd.

John Byl, Wolverine's attorney at Warner Norcross & Judd, and Wolverine and in-house counsel Dave Lachata told her "you guys don't have any," Hendershott said, directing her remark to Chris Hufnagel, Wolverine's senior vice president of strategy.

"I think we'll follow-up in writing," she said.

The moment came well into the question-and-answer portion of a three and a half hour townhall meeting in Rockford; the second to be hosted by the Kent County Health Department to answer community questions about Wolverine PFAS pollution.

State and local officials met with affected homeowners in the Rockford High School Freshman Center cafeteria for several hours prior to the 6 p.m. townhall in the gymnasium, which drew a crowd of roughly 800 that thinned as the event dragged past 9 p.m.

Residents vented frustrations and concerns about health effects from differing levels of PFAS in their drinking water, the "stigma" of a community with poisoned water and the affect the pollution is having on property values.

Many questions were pointed and technical -- why are "low" PFAS levels considered safe? Will Wolverine reimburse the state for its investigation costs? Why is there so much cancer around the Rockford area? -- reflecting a community learning more about the scope of groundwater plumes just discovered this year.

What started as a modest groundwater probe at private wells around Wolverine's old tannery sludge landfill at 1855 House Street NE in Belmont has mushroomed into a multi-township waste dumping investigation in which Wolverine says it has sampled more than 1,000 private drinking water wells so far in several testing zones.

Those homes are southeast of House Street, off Rezen Drive, Childsdale Ave., near 11 Mile and Wolven Ave and along Jewell Ave. NE between 10 and 11 Mile roads.

The first of many lawsuits against Wolverine were filed this week.

Hufnagel, the face of Wolverine since the PFAS crisis began, reiterated the company's pledge to "do the right thing," which involves using experts like Mark Westra, Wolverine's longtime primary

consultant, and Janet K. Anderson, an Integral Consulting toxicologist who has authored Wolverine blog posts downplaying PFAS health risks.

"This is important to us," Hufnagel said.

"Then pay for it," a man yelled from the bleachers.

While the DEQ and Wolverine presentations were focused primarily on House Street and the plume underneath Belmont, many attendees sought answers about extremely high PFAS levels under the former tannery grounds in Rockford and testing around the Boulder Creek Golf Course, which is built atop 12 acres of tannery sludge.

Wells on Bittersweet Drive NE, which is northwest and upgradient of the golf course, have tested for PFAS below the Environmental Protection Agency health advisory level, DEQ staff confirmed. Wells on Chauncey Drive NE have also tested positive at low levels. Both streets are located where investigation managers say PFAS shouldn't be.

David O'Donnell, West Michigan field operations manager for the DEQ remediation division, said Boulder Creek (formerly the Northeast Gravel pit) is a "well documented" site and engineering reports indicate groundwater flows due south.

Doug Phillips, who lives east of the golf course on 7 Mile Road, wasn't satisfied with the answer. The site was a sludge dump for 9 years in the 1970s and is directly across the river from a township wellfield that is shut down because of high PFAS levels.

"Boulder Creek was so close to being a Superfund site, and then what happened?" Phillips asked in the hallway. "That's polluting the municipal wells over in Plainfield Township. That's a huge part of the contamination."

Rick Rediske, an environmental chemistry professor at Grand Valley State University, questioned the veracity of statements made by Anderson, Wolverine's toxicologist, asserting the Rogue River is safe for recreation based on company testing.

Rediske -- who was among the very first to raise the alarm about PFAS from 3M Scotchgard used at the tannery being in the river -- said Wolverine's consultant, Rose & Westra, sampled the river on Oct. 17 after two consecutive rains and the added water would have artificially lowered PFAS detection in the river.

"For some reason, you waited until there was a big rain event and then you went out and grabbed the samples," Rediske said. "And yes, the samples were dilute."

The Environmental Protection Agency, while not present at the meeting, was nonetheless a presence the state members addressed several times following a formal request by Kent County for the state to ask the EPA and Centers for Disease Control for assistance.

Carol Isaacs, director of the newly created Michigan PFAS Response Team (MPART) and Sue Leeming, DEQ external relations director, each said the DEQ has already been in consultation with the EPA, which has been serving as an advisor.

Kenneth Wagner, an adviser to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, visited Michigan on Monday to consult on the Wolverine investigation.

"We talked with him extensively," Leeming said.

A toxicologist with the CDC's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry who declined to be identified was nonetheless a federal presence in the meeting audience.

Immediately prior to Hendershot's disclosure that DEQ doesn't have any Wolverine disposal records Hufnagel said Wolverine was "working to figure out" record gaps.

"In complete transparency, more than five decades have passed since we were disposing of this product," he said. "Where there are gaps in the records, we are working diligently with MDEQ to learn more. We want answers the same way the community does."

Leeming, former head of the remediation division, said documents like Material Data Safety Sheets can shed light on past waste disposal during prior decades when record-keeping rules were less stringent. "We'll be looking into all of that."

<http://woodtv.com/2017/11/29/wolverine-in-crosshairs-over-pfas-at-town-hall-meeting/>

Wolverine in crosshairs over PFAS at town hall meeting

Ken KolkerPublished: November 29, 2017, 11:24 pm

ROCKFORD, Mich. (WOOD) — Some of the questions raised Wednesday at a PFAS town hall meeting were aimed directly at Wolverine Worldwide, the source of a growing contamination crisis.

They were about transparency.

Two of the many speakers at the meeting at the Rockford Freshman Center accused Wolverine of misleading the public when it said it learned only recently that Scotchgard, which it used to treat shoes, once was made with PFAS.

"If you want to be open and transparent, why does it take WOOD TV8 to find the 3M letter that points out you weren't telling the truth at the last meeting?" Rockford activist Lynn McIntosh asked Wolverine Vice President Chris Hufnagel.

Target 8 revealed that 3M wrote to Wolverine in 1999 to warn about PFAS's potential hazards, just before discontinuing it. By mid-2005, the EPA was calling it a possible carcinogen.

Wolverine dumped sludge containing PFAS at its House Street dump in Belmont until 1970s, as well as other sites. Some residential wells are now testing with high levels of the likely carcinogen.

"That does not build confidence," said McIntosh, part of a citizens group that first exposed the contamination. "Anything you say tonight means nothing to me."

Hufnagel did not respond directly to the 3M letter.

“You talk about the respect you’ve lost for Wolverine and we take that seriously,” he said to another resident who questioned why the company didn’t take action years ago after the 3M letter. “We want to rebuild the trust that has been lost through this process.”

The Wolverine vice president was on a panel with state and local officials at the three-hour town hall meeting, organized by the Kent County Health Department, that drew hundreds. Many lined up to ask questions.

Among the panelists was Carol Isaacs, leader of the recently formed Michigan PFAS Action Response Team.

“My biggest goal for you tonight is that I want to ease your fears,” local DEQ supervisor Abigail Hendershott told the crowd.

Among the fears: Contamination spreading from the House Street dump in Belmont, where this all started. It has spread more than two miles into 210 wells — 30 of those over the EPA’s advisory limit of 70 parts per trillion.

Residents also raised questions about Plainfield Township’s municipal water, which has trace levels of PFAS, and about the former Rockford tannery site, which has a staggering PFAS level of 490,000 ppt, which is leaching into the Rogue River.

Some worry about well water with even low levels of PFAS.

“If I lived in the state of New Jersey with a level of 14 (ppt), my drinking water would be considered unsafe,” said Danielle Galloway, of Algoma Township. She’s among a group of residents who tested their own wells in the Russell Ridge neighborhood near 14 Mile Road and Northland Drive. Tests showed PFAS levels of 12 to 17 ppt.

“Why is it considered safe in my home state?” Galloway asked.

Several states have set new lower limits for PFAS. New Jersey is moving toward a level of 14 ppt.

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services toxicologist Kory Groetsch said he trusts the EPA’s advisory level of 70 parts per trillion. However, he recommends residents not drink well water with any PFAS if they live next to a known dump. That, he said, is because of the unknowns. The levels could fluctuate.

“How do you feel about risk?” Groetsch said. “How do you feel about chance? We take lots of risk in life. This one nobody wants to take because you didn’t choose it.”

Drinking Plainfield Township’s municipal water, state officials said, is safe because they test the levels every three months, and the levels remain fairly steady. Tests in 2016 showed 10.5 parts per trillion.

Residents said they are worried about property values.

“We’re focused on health first,” Hufnagel, the Wolverine vice president, responded. “We know we have to look at other issues down the line.”

"We are trying to do the right thing," Hufnagel said. The company expects to spend more than \$3 million this year on its response, including tests and cleanup of dump sites. So far, Wolverine has installed 161 whole-house filters at home near the House Street dump.

"Where there is an issue, we want to eliminate any risk to human health that exists," he said.

Residents also questioned why Wolverine didn't have its own list of dump sites. State officials say laws back then didn't require companies to keep track of where it dumped. Hufnagel, the Wolverine vice president, said he's also frustrated that he doesn't know.

So far, the state has checked 88 possible sites and turned over 20 of those locations to Wolverine for more investigation. Most are around the House Street dump, near Wolven Avenue and 10 Mile Road NE and in the area of Jewell Avenue and 10 Mile.

The Kent County Health Department also said it expects to start a health survey early next year to determine if PFAS has led to pockets of illnesses in areas of contamination. They are asking the CDC to review the survey.

"We want to get this right," Health Department Medical Director Mark Hall said.

RESOURCES FOR BELMONT RESIDENTS:

If you are eligible for a whole-house water filtration system from Wolverine Worldwide, you can call 616.866.5627 or email HouseStreet@wwwinc.com.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Environmental Assistance Center can be reached at 1.800.662.9278.

<http://www.wzzm13.com/news/local/water-worries/experts-discuss-wolverine-contamination-at-town-hall/495693574>

Experts discuss Wolverine contamination at town hall

Phil Dawson, WZZM 4:37 AM. EST November 30, 2017

ROCKFORD, MICH. - Experts assembled by the Kent County Health Department admit there are some questions about PFAS well water contamination they can't answer.

"There is a lot of stuff we don't know about this stuff," says Kent County Health Department Spokesman Steve Kelso.

Wednesday night a panel of scientists and a Wolverine World Wide vice president spoke to the public about waterproofing chemicals the company dumped in townships around their Rockford tannery.

It went on for decades, but was only recently discovered in well water near company property in Plainfield Township. PFAS is associated with some cancers and other illness and people are concerned about long term exposure.

"What is being done to understand the long term health effects of people that decades ago were exposed?" Asked a woman during the town hall meeting.

"If there is a way to go back and answer that, that would be great," replied Kory Groetsch from the State Department of Health and Human Services. "I wouldn't want to promise that is even a possibility."

Experts also said they are investigating over 80 possible Wolverine World Wide dump sites in Kent County are greatly exaggerated.

They have identified 20 sites in four general areas. Out of 614 residential wells tested, 30 samples exceed the 70 parts per trillion maximum set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

"And 180 houses that come in somewhere under 70 parts per trillion," said Abigail Hendershott from the Department of Environmental Quality.

After the first of the year the health department says they will start mailing surveys to residents in the affected areas to try and learn if there has been a spike in cancers or other illness possibly associated with PFAS chemicals.

<http://fox17online.com/2017/11/29/lawsuits-filed-against-wolverine-worldwide/>

Lawsuits filed against Wolverine Worldwide

POSTED 5:39 PM, NOVEMBER 29, 2017, BY [CASEY WALSH](#)

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Lawsuits have been filed against Wolverine Worldwide. Varnum Law has taken on more than 80 clients, but the first filings from impacted residents started Tuesday.

The lawsuits are asking for damages for the impacted residents and stricter regulations on Wolverine to prevent further pollution.

Varnum Law attorney Aaron Phelps said his clients are extremely concerned about their health and the health of their families.

Phelps said his clients lives have been changed by Wolverines' old dumping practices, which has allowed potentially toxic chemicals once used to scotchgard shoes to seep into their groundwater.

"There's all this uncertainty which will come of it in the future. We understand when you ingest these chemicals, they don't leave your body quickly," said Phelps. "You probably have at least trace amounts of them forever."

The plaintiffs, all from Belmont, in the three complaints filed to the Kent County Circuit Court Tuesday include Michael and Laura Metz, Theodore Ryfiak, and Melvin and Marlene Nylaan.

"There are a number of serious illnesses that are associated with exposure so they're very worried about," said Phelps. "Different people have been there for different length of time, some of them have been there for 20 years."

The filings claim Wolverine knowingly polluted the groundwater by dumping barrels and sludge with toxic chemicals known as PFAS. It also claims the sludge left at the House Street dumpsite ran down the ravine, ending up on land owned by MDOT, an area that was not a licensed landfill.

"Other people are worried about property values. In particular, there are residents who had plans to move. There are people who were building homes and planned to sell their existing home when that was completed," said Phelps. "Now they won't be able to do that, at least for the same amount of money they intended to get."

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality said they are investigating as many as 75 dump sites connected to Wolverine Worldwide.

Wolverine Worldwide tells FOX 17 they cannot comment on any ongoing or potential litigation.

<http://www.grbj.com/articles/89436>

Man files lawsuit against Wolverine Worldwide

November 29, 2017 By [Justin Dawes](#)

A man in Belmont has filed a lawsuit against Wolverine Worldwide concerning a contaminated well and his property.

Theodore Ryfiak Jr. lives across the street from the company's former House Street waste dump, and he has found waste on his property and believes there may be more, according to a [post](#) today by WOOD TV.

The lawsuit was filed by Ryfiak in the Kent County Circuit Court by local attorney Aaron Phelps, who said he's representing 100 residents in the area, WOOD TV reports.

The suit is seeking at least \$25,000, alleging Wolverine knew about contamination and covered it up.

Wolverine told the Business Journal it "does not comment on ongoing or potential litigation."

The company previously said it expects to spend \$3 million to this year to deal with the dump sites.

The lawsuit alleges, "Wolverine dumped sludge, barrels and other tannery waste on and around House Street NE, Belmont, Michigan, including at licensed and unlicensed dumps, which Wolverine knew would be discharged into the groundwater and be injurious to public health," according to [WOOD TV](#).

The suit claims more than 200 wells in the Belmont area have "tested positive" for PFAS, WOOD TV reports.

Wolverine Worldwide is maintaining a blog to "keep the community informed on local water testing and related issues."